



## Fighting for First Responders

*As the son of a former Philadelphia police officer, I know how dedicated America's first responders are to keeping our towns and cities safe. Their courage and sacrifice is undeniable and we owe them a debt of gratitude. As a member of Congress, I pledge that I will always fight for our first responders because true homeland security means supporting those who keep us safe. Below are some of the actions that I am taking in Congress to fight for our first responders.*

### ✓ **Fighting for Tax Breaks for First Responders**

#### *Co-sponsored H.R. 943, the Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act*

- To help recruit and retain volunteer emergency responders, several states have passed laws allowing towns to provide property tax rebates to residents who volunteer as emergency responders. However, the IRS has ruled that such incentives are considered income and therefore subject to federal taxation. This bill would change federal tax law to make it clear that these tax rebates cannot be taxed as income. Elements of this bill were included in the Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Act which became law in late 2007.
- The bill is supported by the International Association of Fire Chiefs, National Volunteer Fire Council and the Congressional Fire Services Institute.

### ✓ **Putting More Cops On Our Streets and Giving them the Tools they Need**

#### *Co-Sponsored and Voted for H.R. 1700, the COPS Improvements Act*

- The COPS Improvements Act of 2007 would authorize a total of \$1.15 billion in grant funding to state, local, and tribal governments for community policing, the purchase of new technologies to fight crime, and the development of innovative policing strategies.
- Since its inception in 1994, the COPS Office, at the Department of Justice, has awarded more than \$72 million in grant funding to law enforcement agencies in the 8th District, and put more than 1,000 cops on streets across the 8th District.
- If the bill is passed into law, over \$22 million in additional grant funding could flow into the 8th District and over 400 more cops could be put on our streets.

### ✓ **Ensuring that Our Firefighters Have the Resources They Need**

#### *Voted for Hundreds of Millions of Dollars for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program*

- The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program provides funding for local firefighters to obtain critically needed equipment, protective gear, emergency vehicles, training and other resources needed to protect the public and emergency personnel.
- Voted for a spending bill that provides \$560 million for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program – an increase of \$13 million over the current funding level.
- In 2007 alone, the program has already provided \$432,000 to America Hose, Hook, and Ladder Company #2 in Bristol to purchase a new fire engine, nearly \$41,000 to Warrington Community Ambulance Corps for personal protective equipment, and over \$20,000 to Lower Southampton Fire Dept. #1 also for personal protective equipment.

#### *Voted for Hundreds of Millions of Dollars for the SAFER Grants Program*

- The Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Firefighters (SAFER) program provides much-needed funding for career and volunteer fire departments to hire new firefighters and recruit and retain volunteer firefighters.
- Voted for a spending bill that provides \$190 million for the SAFER program, a large increase over current funding.
- In 2005, the Bristol Township Fire District received \$400,000 through this program that hired and trained four additional firefighters.

## ✓ **Fighting for the Best Technology and Equipment for First Responders**

### ***Fighting for Full Funding for RISS Program – Based in Newtown***

- The RISS program is a nationally implemented program comprised of six regional intelligence centers (one of which is located in Newtown) that provide information sharing, analytical support, training, equipment loans and other important resources to local law enforcement within their regions.
- RISS is particularly important in targeting gang, drug trafficking and possible terrorist activities that span several states or jurisdictions.
- Pushed the Appropriations Committee to fully fund the Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS) program and voted to increase RISS funding by over \$10 million.

### ***Secured Over Two Hundred Thousand Dollars for Interoperability Technology in Bucks County***

- Secured a \$235,000 appropriation for law enforcement interoperability through the Bucks County Department of Corrections. The project will pay for wireless cards and antennae, laptop mounting equipment for police vehicles and wireless service contracts. This would enable uninterrupted communication between local law enforcement organizations across Bucks and throughout the five-county Philadelphia area.

## ✓ **Cracking Down on Gangs**

### ***Co-sponsored H.R. 1582, the Gang Abatement and Prevention Act***

- Authorizes \$1 billion over the next five years to support Federal, State and local law enforcement efforts against violent gangs, witness protection programs and services geared toward gang prevention.
- Increases funding for the Justice Department, federal prosecutors and FBI agents to increase coordinated federal enforcement efforts against violent gangs.
- Creates new criminal gang offenses to prohibit recruitment of minors in a criminal street gang and to punish violent crimes related to gangs.
- Increases the penalties for violent crimes, creates a new federal crime for violence committed in furtherance of drug trafficking, and enacts various other changes to the federal criminal code designed to more effectively deter and punish violence by criminal street gangs and other violent criminals.

### ***Secured Hundreds of Thousands of Dollars for Programs to Eliminate Gang Violence in Bucks County***

- Secured \$352,000 in federal funds for the Bucks County Security Threat Group. The project will empower local police forces to combat gang violence through enforcement, education and prevention of organized crime. Seventy-five percent of the funds would aid the formation of a task force of local law enforcement agencies for proactive policing. The other Twenty-five percent is for preventative measures.

## ✓ **Fighting for Full Benefits for First Responders**

### ***Co-Sponsored H.R. 82, the Social Security Fairness Act***

- This bill will repeal the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), two loopholes that often reduce Social Security benefits for first-responders and their families.
- The GPO reduces public employees' Social Security spousal or survivor benefits if they also receive a public pension from a job that was not covered by Social Security. The GPO often affects individuals who worked as federal, state or local government employees, including as educators, police officers and firefighters.
- The WEP reduces Social Security benefits for people who worked both as public employees in jobs not covered by Social Security and in jobs in which they earned Social Security benefits.

### ***Co-Sponsored H.R. 1142, the Federal Firefighters Fairness Act***

- This bill creates the presumption that federal firefighters who become disabled by heart disease, lung disease, certain cancers and other infectious diseases contracted the illness on the job. Federal firefighters are currently denied this right that a majority of municipal firefighters already enjoy.
- More than 40 states have already enacted similar “presumptive disability” laws and we owe our federal first responders the same occupational safeguards and benefits.

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